

A Study on the Semantic Connotation of Henan Dialect Zhong and the International Transmission Path of Henan Culture

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Abstract: Henan as the main birthplace of Chinese culture, its language connotation has rich cultural implications. However, the development of Henan culture is relatively limited in the contemporary era. There are some problems such as weak competitiveness in international cultural communication. Based on the semantic connotation of the Henan dialect “Zhong”, this paper analyzes the core of Henan culture and the path of its cultural transmission. The study found that the semantic connotation of Henan dialect “Zhong” are positive, neutral and negative semantic tendencies. What’s more, the metaphorical meaning of Henan dialect “Zhong” is relatively diversified, which can express the emotional meaning of agreement, compromise, praise and joy, etc. Henan dialect “Zhong” contains the philosophical thought and cultural core, such as impartiality. In the international communication path of Henan culture represented by Henan dialect “Zhong”, we should take some measures to promote its development. Through the semantic study of Henan dialect “Zhong”, this paper analyzes the current situation of Henan culture development, which can help us to find the measures to solve the dilemma of Henan culture development.

1. Introduction

The Chinese character “Zhong” ranks 22nd in a ranking of the 1,000 Most Commonly Used Chinese characters by frequency, with a frequency of about 24%. According to the statistics of the 3903 edition of the Chinese character frequency of ancient books in the online version of *Guoxue Baodian* on January 1, 2009, the Chinese character “Zhong” ranked the 18th. The data format was used 1196,329 times and 4919,015 times. It is obvious that the Chinese character “Zhong” has been a daily and frequently used Chinese character since ancient times. In addition, the Chinese character “Zhong” is especially frequently used in the dialect of Henan Province. It is widely used, and almost everyone knows it. In the continuous development and inheritance of Henan dialect, the Chinese character “Zhong” has become an important part of Henan dialect and even Henan culture, playing a pivotal role in the development process of international communication of Henan culture.

The high frequency and wide range of use of Chinese character “Zhong” in daily life have attracted wide attention from scholars. Zhu Y. F. & Wu J. W. & Liu L. showed and analyzed the

grammatical form and semantic pragmatic rules of Chinese character “Zhong” in all aspects by comparing Chinese and Russian characters “Zhong”, which aims to study the communication characteristics of Chinese language and culture [1]. From the perspective of spatial construction, Chen H.Y. & Chen C. L. described the nature, semantics and function of “zhong”, which lead to discuss whether it belongs to the range marker or the persistence marker [2]. Scholar Yu Y. R. explores the origin of modern Chinese “Zhong” and Chinese cultural thoughts from the perspective of mythology [3]. From the Chinese character “Zhong” as the starting point, Zhang F. elaborated the origin, shape and content of Chinese formal beauty [4]. However, few scholars put the Chinese character “Zhong” in the framework of Henan dialect to explore the semantic connotation of dialect, the metaphorical meaning of dialect meaning and the connection with the international communication of Henan culture.

Henan Province, known as the “hinterland of Jiuzhou and thoroughfare of ten provinces”, is an important comprehensive transportation hub and human flow logistics information flow center in China, with dense transportation network and extensive access. It is located in the “world”, is the Xia, Shang and Zhou three generations of civilization core area. In the continuous flow of history, Henan Province has formed the Central Plains culture with unique local characteristics, such as prehistoric culture, Heluo culture, farming culture, martial arts culture, opera culture, etc., which has been brilliant and dazzling for a time. However, in the modern changes, there is a phenomenon of “aphasia” in the inheritance and development of Henan culture, and even extreme remarks that vilify Henan people, smear Henan province and Henan dialect appear on the Internet. How to reverse the passive situation of cultural development in Henan? Henan has made some bold attempts, for example, Henan Satellite TV bold innovation, launched a series of high level, good reputation of large cultural dance evening parties jumped up the network, caused a wide range of hot discussion, won a large number of users praise and praise, Make the public aware of the extensive and profound cultural deposits of Henan Province. However, the predicament of international communication and development of Henan culture has not been completely reversed. The author intends to explore the charm of Central Plains culture through the clue of Henan dialect “Zhong”, so as to try to put forward effective ways of international communication and development of Henan culture.

2. The Semantic Connotation of Henan Dialect “Zhong”

Zhong, Chinese standard level I characters (common characters). There are two pronunciations: “zhōng”, “zhòng”. It was first seen in oracle bone inscriptions, which were pictographic characters [5], and one said finger-pointing characters [6]. In the *Xinhua Dictionary*, Chinese characters have the following meanings: (1) Oracle bone inscriptions, like a flagpole, with banners and streamers above and below, the flagpole upright in the middle. Original meaning: center; Refers to a moderate location within a certain range. (2) Inside. The opposite of “outside”. (3) Location name. Generally refers to a region or period of time. It's centered. (4) Inside. (5) Internal organs. (6) Medium. (7) Ok. (8) Easy. (9) Appropriate. (10) Be impartial and honest. (11) Be loyal. According to *Xinhua Dictionary*, it can be found that the Chinese character “zhong” has two pronunciations, which can be used as nouns, adjectives and verbs. Different parts of speech have different pronunciations and great semantic differences. Although the semantic connotation of Chinese character “Zhong” is quite different, there is a certain correlation between them.

Roseh believed that the meanings of words formed a category with both differences and connections and archetypal effect, and each meaning formed a radial structure centered on the archetypal meaning, from which other related meanings could be derived [7]. The Chinese character “Zhong” evolved from pictographic characters, the original meaning is the center, middle, refers to

a moderate position within a certain range. In the process of semantic evolution of Chinese character “Zhong”, it is not difficult to find that the original meaning is the prototype of the whole semantic category of Chinese character “Zhong”. Then, on the basis of the original meaning, it extends the meaning to azimuth name. Generally refers to a region or period of time is centered. However, human society takes the basic archetype as a reference point and extends this reference point outward with the typicality of other members [8].

The meaning of Chinese character “Zhong” also has a similar evolution process. With the development of society, the meaning category of Chinese character “Zhong” has gradually expanded, gaining the meaning of “inner, inside”, “inner, viscera” and “medium”. At this stage, the meaning of the Chinese character “Zhong” is expanded by analogy. For example, the center of the original meaning is transformed from the original concept that the flagpole is the center of a region. The heart is the center of the body, inside is the center of a house or building, medium indicates a certain character of a person or something, accounting for the middle part of the overall level.

From the original meaning to the additive meaning, the reference is constantly changing, but the core meaning of “center” does not change. However, after the transformation of the part of speech of Chinese character “Zhong”, it is difficult to connect the new meaning with the original meaning through the transformation of real objects. Through observation, it is found that new meanings occur on the basis of original meanings. The meaning of Chinese character “zhong” can better adapt to more contexts and spread to a wider range only through the process of semantic ambiguity. This is also an important reason why the meaning of Chinese character “Zhong” can constantly increase, and one of the important factors why Chinese character “Zhong” can become a frequently used word in daily life. So far, the meaning category of Chinese character “Zhong” is still expanding and changing constantly, but it is constantly expanding and developing around based on the original meaning “center”, the prototype meaning.

As a local variation of language, dialects differ greatly in different regions due to the influence of different regions’ landforms, production and life styles, history and culture, but the difference between local dialects in neighboring regions is smaller. The gap between local dialects here refers not only to the difference in pronunciation of the same word in different dialects, but also to the difference in semantic connotation of the same word in different local dialects. Generally speaking, local dialects contain relatively rich local customs and culture factors. For example, the Chinese character “Zhong” is widely used in Henan. When the Chinese character “Zhong” is used in different situations with different tone and intonation, it has different semantic connotation, semantic tendency and emotional color. Take a look at the following example (These examples are available in pinyin and English translations):

Example (1) Xia Wu He Xi Fan Ba.

Zhong.

Let’s have porridge in the afternoon.

Ok!

Example (2) Ming Tian Zhong Wu Ji De Lai He Xi Jiu Ya!

Zhong Zhong Zhong, Yi Ding Qu!

Remember to come for the wedding tomorrow!

Ok, definitely go!

Example (3) Ni Gan Jin Ba Zi Ji Wo Shi De Wei Sheng Da Sao Yi Xia! Zang Si Le, Kuai Dian!

Zhong Zhong Zhong, Wo Zhi Dao Le.

You need to clean up your bedroom! It’s filthy! Hurry up!

Ok, fine, fine. I got it.

Example (4) Jiu 90 Kuai Qian Ba.

Zhong Ba, Zhong Ba, Jiu Dang Gei Ni Shao Yi Jian.

Let's make it 90 yuan.

Ok, ok, I just thought I'd bring you one.

Example (5) He Nan Hui Mian Wei Dao Zen Me Yang?

Zhong!

How about Henan stewed noodles?

Good!

It is not difficult to find that the Henan dialect “Zhong” in example (1) has no obvious polarity of emotion and only indicates agreement with the above proposal. Here, Henan dialect “Zhong” is an adjective part of speech with semantic connotation of “good, ok, fine.” and neutral emotional color without special metaphorical meaning. In example (2), “Zhong” in Henan dialect has obvious emotional color. In this example, “Zhong” has two metaphorical meanings, one is to accept the invitation to have a wedding wine. The other is the invitee’s blessing to the invitee. The two convey a kind of joy to each other, both the invitee’s spirit of joy at the happy event and the invitee’s blessing. But needless to say, in Henan dialect, just a “zhong zhong zhong” can be expressed. In example (3), Henan dialect “Zhong” expresses a kind of negative emotional color, implying the passive and helpless response of the responder, even with the meaning of perfunctory. And in the example (4) of “Zhong Ba, Zhong ba”, obviously is a kind of passive helpless compromise, but through combining the actual situation. It is not difficult to find that this is a kind of common bargain tricks sold by the shopkeeper. In fact, in order to facilitate the transaction as soon as possible to do the performance. Therefore, here “Zhong” is a kind of positive compromise metaphor connotation. The “Zhong” in (5) On the basis of combining the context, we can find that this is a kind of corpus commonly used in the external publicity of Henan province at present, praising the characteristic food of Henan province in Henan dialect, so that other people from the outside can easily grasp the characteristics of Henan culture. Therefore, “Zhong” here can be regarded as a positive metaphorical connotation of praise.

To sum up, the semantic connotation of “Zhong” in Henan dialect can be divided into three semantic tendencies, they are positive semantic tendency, neutral semantic tendency and negative semantic tendency. In addition, the meaning of “Zhong” in Henan dialect is relatively simple, but it contains rich metaphorical meaning. The metaphorical meaning of “Zhong” in Henan dialect can express agreement, compromise, praise, or happiness, etc. Due to different contexts, the specific meaning to be expressed may vary slightly. When the semantic tendency of “Zhong” in Henan dialect is combined with the metaphorical meaning it can express, a variety of permutations and combinations can be used.

3. The Philosophical Thought and Cultural Core of Henan Dialect “Zhong”

Dialect culture refers to the phenomenon, use and dialect itself with cultural significance and value [9]. In other words, dialect is closely related to culture. Dialect is a symbol of regional change and development, and contains distinct cultural characteristics of a region. Cultural inheritance, innovation and development will promote the renewal of dialect vocabulary and grammar. The emergence of dialects means that the culture of this region is vibrant and vibrant. Henan dialect “Zhong” is not only a high-frequency language used in daily life of Henan people, but also one of the cultural carriers of Henan region. We can also get a glimpse of Henan culture from the character “Zhong” in Henan dialect.

Philosophy is the core of culture. Whatever philosophy there is, there will be corresponding culture. A philosophy is always produced in a culture, and it is the inheritance and development of a culture. Henan’s iconic local dialect “Zhong” is the language philosophy extracted from the life of Henan people. The shape of the oracle bone inscriptions of Chinese character “Zhong” is like a flag

fluttering on a flagpole, and its original meaning is a kind of banner of the clan in primitive society [10]. In short, the Chinese character “Zhong” was originally applied to political activities or has a specific political purpose, reflected as a political category.

On this basis, with the continuous development of history, it combines with the governing ideas of rulers in different times to form new semantic connotation. In the Han Dynasty, the Chinese character “Zhong” has a new philosophical connotation, namely impartial. Therefore, during this period, the Chinese character “Zhong” acquired the new philosophical thoughts of “simplicity of the road” and “impartiality”. In the meaning of the Chinese character “Zhong”, there is also a corresponding embodiment, at this time, the Chinese character “Zhong” can be used as an adjective, meaning “ok, good, fine”. This meaning contains the idea of the mean, and then reflected in the character of the local people. As the core region of ancient statesmen seeking to conquer the Central Plains, it is not surprising that there are traditional philosophical thoughts in the words and deeds of Henan people. From the strong political color of the Chinese character “Zhong” to its expansion into the high-frequency response language in the daily life of Henan people, Henan reflects the simple, sincere, frank and open style of action of Henan people, and also shows the warm, inclusive and generous character of Henan people.

Culture is the sum total of language and writing. Culture is the system sum of symbols (mainly characters, supplemented by images) and sounds (mainly language, supplemented by phonology and notes) created and commonly recognized and used by people in the process of continuous development of human society. Henan dialect “Zhong” as a common language in the life of Henan people, also reflects the characteristics of Central Plains culture. The metaphorical meaning of “Zhong” in Henan dialect contains compromise and concession, and does not get on the wrong side of others, which is reflected in the compatibility of culture in Henan culture. As the center of ancient politics, the change of different dynasties in Henan created a tolerant and generous cultural environment. No matter which ethnic group and which regime is in power, the Central Plains region is the center of economic, cultural, scientific and technological development. Today, this tolerance has been transformed into a passion for foreigners. No matter where you come from or where you are going, Henan people will warmly greet you and ask you whether you have eaten or not. If not, they will immediately invite you to your home for dinner and rest. Henan people’s simplicity, practical work and broad heart make Henan people always face life optimistically no matter what difficulties they are in.

In the Chinese character “Zhong” in Henan dialect, the words with strong political meaning have been innovatively changed into civil use and have evolved various usages. This evolution process all reflects the openness and innovation of Henan people in treating new things, and the courage to accept new things and apply them in daily life. The Henan culture, which is brave in pioneering and innovating and accepting new things, has been well inherited from ancient times to modern times. In this year’s “*Wonderful Night*” and a series of large-scale cultural and creative programs, we can get a glimpse of this. However, as an important political region in ancient China, it has created countless splendid civilizations. However, in the international communication of local culture, Henan culture does not play its due level and strength.

In terms of cultural communication, Dengfeng’s Shaolin martial arts culture enjoys a great reputation in the world. However, Henan culture is far more than that. In terms of martial arts culture, Chen’s Tai Chi in Jiaozuo, Henan Province is no less impressive. There is the ancient capital culture of Luoyang and Kaifeng, the Yin and Shang culture of Yin Ruins in Anyang, not to mention the Henan Opera, which almost everyone in Henan can sing, also known as Henan Bangzi, and so on. However, the world-famous Henan culture is not much, even the civilization of the whole country of Henan culture is also little, even more negative information about Henan. Where should the cultural development and dissemination of Henan go in the new era?

4. The International Transmission Path of Henan Culture Represented by Henan Dialect “Zhong”

In a broad sense, international communication refers to all kinds of information communication activities that cross national boundaries, while in a narrow sense, it refers to mass communication that crosses national boundaries, whose subject is mostly national government [11]. In the context of economic globalization, no region can develop in isolation. Making good use of international communication, it is immeasurable the economic benefits and positive social impact for a region, a nation, a country. With a long history and rich cultural deposits, how to embark on the rapid economic and cultural train of the new era has a very important impact on the development of this region. The author believes that all this should start from innovating the international communication path, and there are the following suggestions.

4.1. To Study and Formulate Norms and Standards for International Communication of Henan Culture

The international communication of Henan culture has been strongly supported by the Henan government and the state, but its communication norms and standards have not yet formed a systematic, institutionalized. By observing the current situation of international communication of Henan culture, it is found that it is scattered and disorderly, and the content of communication is mixed. In the face of this situation, on the one hand, the government should take the lead to develop the corresponding norms and standards of international communication of Henan culture, and rectify the existing international communication phenomenon of Henan culture. On the other hand, by organizing experts and scholars in related fields to make scientific and reasonable suggestions in content production, main body operation and effect evaluation, the intention is to create a social and cultural environment conducive to the international communication of Henan culture. It aims to promote the modern interpretation and transformation of Henan culture and enhance the discourse power of Henan culture in international communication.

4.2. Pay Attention to the Cultural Differences of International Communication of Henan Culture

In the process of international cultural communication, it is necessary to have a transcoding between language and culture. It has a effective cultural communication between the cultural disseminators and the the cultural receivers under the condition of overcoming the language barrier. In addition, there are great cultural differences among different cultures. In the process of international cultural communication, international communicators should be familiar with the cultural differences of different countries. Besides, it is able to effectively solve the problems of cultural differences by means of translation. What’s more, it is familiar with the rules of international cultural communication, which benefit to deal with the noise from different countries scientifically and effectively and address cultural misunderstandings from different national positions.

4.3. Strengthen the Construction of Talent Team for International Communication of Henan Culture

In the fierce competition of the 21st century, all kinds of competition in the final analysis is talent competition. Only by attaching importance to talents, can we take the lead in the development and innovation of various fields. The government needs talents in linguistics and translation. Only

by protecting the integrity, inheritance and translatability of dialects can the uniqueness of local culture be preserved. Only by doing so can local culture be revitalized in the new era. Secondly, in the process of external communication, someone needs to be able to tell Henan stories vividly. Proper understanding and translation of cultural stories by communicators is the key step for Henan culture to spread internationally. Thirdly, the inseparable relationship between culture and language determines that the international communication of Henan culture is inseparable from the practice of linguistics talents.

5. Conclusion

In the process of inheritance and development, Chinese character “Zhong” takes its original meaning as the prototype, and then continuously obtains new meaning in the process of development. In the case of the gradual increase of the meaning of Chinese character “Zhong”, the part of speech is also transformed from noun to adjective, and the meaning of the word is showing a trend of becoming blurred. In addition, the actual use of the Chinese character “Zhong” has evolved from the initial political use to a wide range of applications in various fields, among which the use of Henan dialect is particularly typical. In terms of the semantic connotation of “Zhong” in Henan dialect, the linguistic tendency of “Zhong” in dialect has polar characteristics. There are mainly three kinds, namely positive semantic tendency, neutral semantic tendency and negative semantic tendency. In addition, it contains rich metaphorical meaning, generally speaking, can express the meaning of agreement, compromise, praise and happiness. In the actual application, the semantic tendency and metaphorical meaning of “Zhong” in Henan dialect can be arranged and combined and used selectively. The specific situation needs to be analyzed according to the specific context.

In terms of the philosophical thought and cultural core of “Zhong” in Henan dialect, the philosophical thought of “Zhong” in Henan dialect is consistent with the philosophical connotation of the mean and impartiality. The shadow of the thought of the mean can also be seen in the daily use of dialects. In addition, the relationship between language and culture is inseparable. Dialect, as a special language, has a very close relationship with culture. In Henan dialect, the Chinese character “Zhong” can be understood as the meaning of “ok, good, fine”. In the practical application process, the meaning of compromise, tolerance, not fighting, moderate. This is in line with the cultural core of inclusiveness, openness and innovation in Henan culture. However, Henan culture is extensive and profound, with a long history. In the new era, in terms of international communication and external discourse power, there is a situation of “aphasia”, which leads to the predicament of cultural development. Only by innovating the international communication path of Henan culture can we break the shackles of cultural development. The author believes that there are several ways to innovate the international communication of Henan culture. First, to study and formulate norms and standards for international communication of Henan culture, so as to make the international communication path more professional and reasonable. Second, pay attention to the cultural differences in international communication of Henan culture. On the basis of understanding the differences among cultures, we can better assume the responsibilities and tasks of international communication. Third, strengthen the construction of talent team for international communication of Henan culture, and use talents in linguistics and translation to solve the actual problems of language transcoding in the process of international communication.

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